

[Henry W. Black]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS [?] Ohio St.

DATE [Nov.?] 7, [?] SUBJECT Negro [History?]

1. Name and address of informant -Henry W. Black, 5007 N. 30 St.
2. Date and time of interview - Nov. 7, 1938 - 12:00 to 3:00 P.M.
3. Place of interview - In the home of Mr. Black.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant,
Mr. [?] F. Squire — [?] N. 28th St.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you.

None.

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Mr. Black lives in a very modern five room house that is very nicely furnished. The surroundings are very pleasant. As Mr. Black spends a great deal of time around his home he has made it very comfortable. He has a lot of collections and [relics?] that he proudly display.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio st.

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DATE Nov. 7, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Henry W. Black 3007 H. 30 st.

1. Ancestry - Mr. Black's Mother was Indian and his father French-Canadian and Negro.
2. Place and date of birth - Mr. Black was born in Chicago, Ill, in 1872.
3. Family - His family at present consist of a wife only. He has two children by a previous marriage. Both are living in California.
4. Place lived in, with dates - He lived in Chicago until the second fire in 1878. The family left Chicago and lived in Milwaukee for one year. After leaving Milwaukee the family lived in Kansas City Mo. for one year and came to Omaha in 1880. He has continued to live here since.
5. Education, with dates. Mr. Black was only able to secure a six grade education as he had to leave school and help support the family. His father left his mother with five other children and it was very necessary. However by going to night school he was able to further his education later.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates. *Mr. Black is a retired Mail carrier having spent 37 years carrying mail in Omaha. He was retired in 1937 at the age of 65. At the present time he is enjoying his hobby of making [scrap?] books, and traveling.
7. Special skills and interest. - Mr. Black is interested in Community activities and is on the Board of Directors of the Urban League and the Colored Old Folks Home. He also serves his Church in many different ways.
8. Community and religious activities. - This is stated above as they are his interests.

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9. Description of informant. - Mr. Black is a man of light complexion. His hair is very gray which gives him a very distinguished appearance. He seems to be of very high mentality. He is above average height and although not fat he is very developed physically.

10. Other points gained in interview.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE Nov. 7, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Henry W. Black — 3007 N. 30 st. TEXT OF INTERVIEW WITH HENRY W. BLACK.

Nov. 7, 1938 - 12:00 to 3:00

Mr. Henry Black, who is one of [Omaha's?] oldest Negro citizens, was born in Chicago, Ill in [1872?]. He was one of five children. His father was owner of a small hotel in Chicago that was destroyed by the second Chicago fire. As the family was left nearly destitute they immediately left Chicago and went to Milwaukee Wisconsin where Mr. Black senior was able to secure employment. The family lived in Milwaukee for one year leaving there in 1879. Their next trip took them to Kansas City Mo. where the father was able to secure better employment. The family remained in Kansas City for a short time, until Mr. Black heard of the opening of employment for Negroes in the [Smelting?] industry. The family arrived in Omaha in 1880 and made their home in what was then the Negro district at twentieth and [Barney?] st.

During this period of time the population of Omaha's Negroes had increased to about five (5) hundred. This was due almost entirely to the various industries that were beginning to give Negroes employment.

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Mr. Black is a retired mail carrier and has had the opportunity to work in various parts of the city, seeing and helping the city to grow. His hobby is and has been for the past fifty years that of keeping a scrap book. He has newspaper clipping dating back as far as 1895 that were used as reference material during the interview. From this Scrap-book of Mr. Black we find that the first Negro child born in Omaha was William Leper. He was born in 1872 at 13th and Jackson st. in an old frame building. Harry Curry and [Cumford? Baker] were the first graduates of the Omaha High. They were graduated in 1880. The first Negro physician in Omaha was Dr. Stephenson, who came to Omaha in 1890. Later Dr. [Richetts?] came to Omaha. Dr. Richetts was the first Negro to serve in the State Legislature. This clipping is from the Omaha Progress dated February 21, 1895 (The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners met during the afternoon and appointed the following Negroes to the Fire Dept. — S. Ernest capt; J. H. Henderson Lieut; Scott Jackson driver; Jas. D. Hardin and E. [?] Watts regulars; H. W. Black and P. Walker reserves.

From this Scrap-book we find that the oldest Negro churches in Omaha are St. John A.M.E. Church, which was organised in 1880, St. Phillip the Deacon organized in 1887 and Zion Baptist organized in 1894. Father Green was the first priest of St. Phillip. He served until about 1891 when Father John Albert Williams was called to this parish. Father Williams served this church until 1933 at the time of his death. His life was one of [continues?] service to his church and community.

Father Williams married Lucy Cambol, who was one of the two Negro teachers that have taught in the public schools of Omaha. The other Negro teacher in the public schools was Miss Eula Overall, Now Mrs. Britt. Mrs. Britt lives in California.

The other pioneer Negroes that Mr. Black spoke of are; Cyrus Bell who edited the first Negro paper; [Guith?] Coffee, who was the only Negro blacksmith in the city. Mr. Coffee was so strong that he was under peace bond continually, as he often lost his temper and would injure any one he hit. The first Negro Hotel in Omaha was operated by a [Mr.?)

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Lewis at 10th and Capitol sts. This was about 1890. The first grocery store was also at 10th and Capitol Sts., and was owned by a Mr. Adams. This likewise was about 1890. The first Negro policemen to be appointed were Frank Bellamy, Jess [Bowman?], Jack [Runsoll?] and [Noah?] Thomas. Mr. Thomas is living in Omaha and has promised to give information regarding the history of the early Omaha Police force.